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Second review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, prepared in response to the request of the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2011/28, provides a preliminary assessment of the second review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, including information about the regional preparations for the second review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan, as well as regional and national policy developments subsequent to the first review and appraisal cycle of 2007-2009.

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Contents

		Page
I.	Introduction	3
II.	Second review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002: the process to date at the regional level	3
III.	Policy developments: regional overview and priorities	4
IV.	Overview of policy developments at national level since the first review and appraisal: older persons and development	9
V.	Advancing health: an imperative for well-being into old age	13
VI.	Ensuring enabling and supportive environments	17

I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 2011/28, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to the Commission for Social Development, at its fiftieth session, to include an analysis of the preliminary findings of the second review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002.

2. Since the report was prepared prior to the submission of national review and appraisal reports to the regional commissions, the information presented herein is preliminary in nature and is by no means fully representative of trends at the national or regional levels. Given that the review and appraisal process is a regionally driven exercise, the report is primarily based on submissions received from the regional commissions and organizations of the United Nations and from civil society organizations, as well as on other information available to the Secretariat, in particular the draft of a publication, scheduled to be issued in 2012, to be entitled *The State of the World's Older Persons*, which is being prepared by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in collaboration with HelpAge International, with contributions from 10 United Nations entities. The draft contains the results of extensive consultations with older persons on their quality of life and their views on progress in implementing the Madrid Plan of Action.

3. The report aims to provide a preliminary regional overview of priorities and status of implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action, along with preliminary ideas for the focus of future regional efforts as reported by the regional commissions with supporting information from other stakeholders.

II. Second review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002: the process to date at the regional level

4. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), with funding and cooperation from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, has organized a regional training workshop to be held in Addis Ababa from 30 November to 2 December 2011. Representatives of 20 Member States from the region were invited to discuss national and regional efforts on the basis of their draft national country reports. The workshop will also provide an opportunity to discuss data collection and participatory approaches. The Commission expects participants to finalize their country reports by early 2012.

5. The working group on ageing of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) was established to guide the implementation, review and appraisal of the ECE regional implementation strategy. The national phase of the second review and appraisal began in 2011, with guidelines on national reporting issued in English and Russian. The results of the national reviews were to be submitted to the ECE secretariat by the end of October 2011. National findings will be presented at a ministerial conference on ageing to be held in September 2012.

6. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) is holding several advance preparatory meetings for the review and appraisal of the regional strategy in Latin America and the Caribbean (2003) and the Brasilia

Declaration (2007), which will take place in Costa Rica from 9 to 11 May 2012. On 9 and 10 November 2011, representatives of 22 Member States from the region and representatives from civil society and academia will take part in an international meeting on the follow-up to the Brasilia Declaration. Topics to be discussed included: public institutional arrangements and ageing; the human rights of older persons; social services and social protection; and research and training. An inter-parliamentary meeting on older persons also took place on 9 September 2011, organized by the Forum of Presidents of Legislative Bodies of Central America and the Caribbean and the Nicaraguan Legislative Assembly, with technical support from ECLAC. Additionally, the PanAmerican Congress of Gerontology and Geriatrics, which is an academic forum, is organizing two working groups as part of the follow-up to the Brasilia Declaration, with the support of the Government of Argentina.

7. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) is conducting a regional survey among Member States to assess new developments in policies and programmes since the first review and appraisal exercise. ESCAP has encouraged Governments in the region to use a participatory bottom-up approach in carrying out their national review and appraisal exercises, as called for by the Commission for Social Development. At the time of the preparation of the present report, the Governments of Armenia, China, Thailand and Viet Nam had confirmed that they were following such an approach.

8. ESCAP has organized a preparatory meeting to be held from 22 to 24 November 2011 in Beijing, to identify key priorities for the region and to determine the agenda for the Asia-Pacific high-level intergovernmental meeting on the second review and appraisal, which will be held in early 2012.

9. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) is to hold its second regional review of the Madrid Plan of Action at a meeting in Beirut from 7 to 9 December 2011. Member States were being requested to: (a) prepare country reports for the meeting; (b) identify obstacles to implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action; and (c) produce recommendations for an agenda for further regional implementation. In the lead up to the meeting, ESCWA published a social policy brief entitled "Reinforcing social equity: mainstreaming ageing issues in the process of development planning in the ESCWA region", and issued a report on the demographic profile of older people in the region.

III. Policy developments: regional overview and priorities[1]

A. Economic Commission for Africa

10. Africa has the youngest population of all the major regions in the world, owing to continued high levels of fertility and mortality. However, the number of older persons in Africa, which stood at 56 million in 2010 and accounted for 8 per cent of the world's population aged 60 and older, is projected to increase faster than in any

[1] Section III of the report presents issues that were underlined by the regional commissions and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs as main priorities in their respective regions. This does not, however, preclude the fact that those issues are cross-cutting in all regions worldwide.

other major region, and to reach 215 million, an almost fourfold increase, by 2050.[2] As a result, the proportion of older persons will more than double, from 5 per cent in 2010 to 11 per cent in 2050. Among African countries, Mauritius had the highest proportion of older persons in 2010 (11 per cent), while Burkina Faso was the country with the lowest proportion (4 per cent).

11. In the face of many competing priorities, issues important to older persons remain low on national development agendas in the African region. Poverty and income insecurity in old age continue to be critical issues. The overwhelming majority of older persons in the region do not enjoy any social protection. However, some Member States, including Botswana, Lesotho, Mauritius, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland,[3] have introduced non-contributory social pensions for older persons. While these pensions contribute to reducing poverty among older persons who receive them, and allow those older persons to contribute to family income and stability, the overall number of recipients remains rather small.

12. Health infrastructure limitations in Africa add a particular burden to the daily lives of older persons. Access to primary health care remains both an economic and a physical challenge for large numbers of older persons. The situation is also compounded by the severe shortage of health-care personnel trained in gerontology and geriatrics.

13. In addition, there are numerous cases of widows being accused of witchcraft and subjected to violence and killing reported by civil society and the media across sub-Saharan Africa.

B. Economic Commission for Europe

14. Europe, home to 161 million persons aged 60 and over, 23 per cent of the world's elderly population, in 2010, has the oldest population of all major regions. The absolute number of older persons in Europe will continue to rise and is expected to reach 236 million by 2050. Europe will continue to have the oldest population in the world, with a proportion of older persons that is projected to increase from 22 per cent in 2010 to 34 per cent in 2050. In Europe, Finland had the highest proportion of older persons in 2010 (25 per cent), while the Republic of Moldova had the lowest proportion (16 per cent).

15. Recent age-related policies and priorities have centred on reforming pension systems, improving health care and developing long-term care systems.

16. During the first review and appraisal cycle, 12 countries of the ECE region reported that they had initiated, or completed, comprehensive pension reform.[4] Pension reform continues to be one of the hallmarks of recent policy adjustments. Major measures implemented and/or contemplated include: increasing the age at which one is eligible to receive an old-age pension; making retirement more flexible and gradual; pegging pension benefits to cost of living, rather than wage increases; reducing early retirement benefits; and encouraging private savings to self-funded retirement schemes.

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[2] United Nations (2011), *World Population Prospects*, the 2010 revision (see http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/unpp/index.htm, accessed on 10 October 2011).

[3] See A/65/157, para. 46.

[4] E/CN.5/2008/2, para. 12.

17. In several ECE countries, attempts at delaying retirement and exit from the workforce in the context of pension reform are hampered by the high level of unemployment. Increasing the labour force participation of older workers also rests on addressing age discrimination in the workplace, an issue that has so far received limited attention.

18. Reform of the health-care and long-term care sectors to meet the needs of older persons is another priority shared by all countries in the ECE region. Increasing attention is being paid to the quality of care both in institutions and at home. To that effect, many ECE countries now provide benefits to persons who take care of an older, ill or disabled family member. However, austerity measures taken by national and local Governments in the context of the ongoing financial and economic crisis seem to have translated into the curtailment of health-care spending and programmes of which older persons were major beneficiaries.

19. Emerging research suggests that abuse, neglect and violence against older persons, both at home and in institutions, are much more prevalent than currently acknowledged, and that prevention of such cases should be high on the policy agenda. "Ageing in place", through the provision of services and improvements to existing infrastructure, is another objective that is increasingly being considered by policymakers. Research also suggests that greater emphasis should be placed on long-term preventive approaches to a healthier life, through reducing risk factors in early life that lead to obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular diseases in later life.

C. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

20. During the next few decades, the ECLAC region will experience a steady increase in both the proportion and the absolute number of persons aged 60 and over. The number of older persons in the region stood at 59 million and accounted for 8 per cent of the world's elderly population in 2010. That number is projected to reach 188 million in 2050. The proportion of persons aged 60 and over will more than double between 2010 and 2050, from 10 per cent to 25 per cent. Caribbean countries, including Cuba (17 per cent), have the highest proportion of older persons in the region, while Central American countries, such as Guatemala (6 per cent) have the lowest proportion.

21. National priorities identified during the first review and appraisal in ECLAC countries included the development of non-contributory pensions, increased coverage of public health care, the provision of free medication and the development or expansion of home-based health care. Some countries also reported initiatives to prevent abuse of, and violence against, older persons.

22. The growing number of national action plans and initiatives on ageing in the region since the first review and appraisal indicates that interest in ageing issues in Latin America and the Caribbean has gained considerable momentum. In recent years, ageing has been increasingly mainstreamed in national development strategies and social development programmes. Since 2008, several countries have also prioritized the promotion and protection of the rights of older persons and adopted legislation and/or made constitutional provisions to that effect. Some countries have also repealed provisions that have contributed to age discrimination.

23. The region is slowly moving towards a more integrated approach to issues of older age, and most countries have institutional arrangements to that effect in the form of directorates within a ministry of social affairs/development, institutes and/or councils. As a result, issues such as violence against older persons and the care and participation of older persons are becoming part of all programmes benefiting older persons.

24. While a number of organizations led by and focused on older persons have been established, the promotion of the participation of older persons is an area that has received limited funding. Additionally, the issue of older persons in emergency situations has received little attention to date, as illustrated by the particular vulnerabilities experienced by older persons following the earthquakes in Haiti and Chile in 2010.[5] Other areas in need of greater attention are old-age migration, growing old in rural areas as well as in urban settings, lifelong learning and access to productive technologies.

25. The lack of medical personnel who have been trained in geriatrics remains a large problem in the region, despite progress made in expanding the provision of formal training programmes at several universities. Additional specialized areas of geriatric health such as mental health, HIV and AIDS and older women's health are also in need of significant support. The provision of training for caregivers is common in Caribbean countries, but not in Latin America. Progress has also been made in institutionalizing the regulation of long-term care institutions, but regulations are often weak and poorly implemented. Finally, significant inequalities persist in the provision of services and benefits owing to economic, physical and cultural barriers.

26. Data and research are other areas that have received particular attention in this region. Nearly all Latin American countries have bodies dedicated to research on ageing issues, although they are rather heterogeneous in terms of research coverage, staffing and budget. In some cases, the research centres are small, and conduct small-scale studies that have limited impact on the national agenda. The availability of data on older persons has also improved, in part through the support of the United Nations, although the frequency and quality of data production, the issues studied and their accessibility vary across countries. Across the region, research on such issues as domestic violence, disability, access to technologies and voting patterns remains limited.

D. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

27. In several countries in the ESCAP region, the number of older persons is rising at an unprecedented pace, representing one of the most significant demographic transformations of the twenty-first century at both the regional and global levels. It is estimated that the number of older persons in the Asia-Pacific region will triple in the next 40 years, from 414 million — 59 per cent of the world's elderly population — in 2010 to 1.25 billion by 2050. The proportion of people aged 60 and over in the total population will more than double between 2010 and 2050, from 10 per cent to 24 per cent. In 2010, Japan was the country with the highest percentage of older

[5] See http://www.helpage.org.

persons (30 per cent) in the ESCAP region, while the Lao People's Democratic Republic was among the countries with the lowest percentage (5 per cent).

28. Issues relating to older persons continue to be high on the policy agenda of many countries in the region, in particular those with higher numbers of older people. Current policy priorities are similar to those which were the focus of attention during the first review and appraisal, although there are some significant differences in emphasis.

29. At the time of the first review and appraisal, emphasis was given to implementing health sector reforms to ensure health-care coverage, and to rising levels of abuse and violence against older persons. In contrast, the lack of social protection for a large number of older persons and the limited capacity to meet the rising demand for care services have dominated discussions at recent regional forums. Most countries in the region have traditionally relied on family care-giving and intergenerational living arrangements, and have been slow to act in the face of evidence that traditional support systems have been breaking down over the past decade.

30. The gender dimensions of ageing have gained greater attention in the region, particularly health issues faced by older women, their greater vulnerability to poverty, social isolation and violence and the care burden borne by older women.

31. Another topic that has received increased attention in some countries in Asia and the Pacific is the building of age-friendly environments, which include housing, infrastructure and public facilities.

32. In a number of countries, civil society organizations have actively engaged in organizing consultations and community mobilization so that the voices of older persons might be heard during the review and appraisal process as well as in the formulation of a national policy on ageing.

E. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

33. While the population of Western Asia remains young, the region is on a fast-ageing track. In 2010, the number of persons aged 60 and older was estimated at 16 million — 2 per cent of the world's elderly population. However, this population is projected to more than quadruple in the next 40 years, to reach 69 million in 2050. The proportion of persons aged 60 and over in the region as a whole was estimated at 7 per cent in 2010, and is projected to increase to 19 per cent by 2050. Lebanon has, by far, the highest percentage of persons aged 60 years and older in the region (10 per cent) while Qatar and the United Arab Emirates have the lowest percentage (less than 2 per cent).

34. Several countries in the region have only recently recognized the importance of putting ageing issues on the development agenda. The focus of policies and programmes in Western Asian countries during the first review and appraisal was primarily on improving health services to older persons by increasing the number of specialized health-related centres, day-care centres, mobile clinics, medical personnel and medical devices, as well as the provision of medicines.

35. In the ESCWA region, social issues tend to be viewed from a social welfare perspective. As a result, programmes and policies generally target certain vulnerable

social groups, such as poor older persons and persons with disabilities. Most Western Asian countries continue to rely on the family to provide care and support to older persons and, until recently, tended to equate ageing policies with support to families. Homes for the elderly are not common, and, where available, are beyond the means of most older persons

36. Current national ageing policies continue to prioritize efforts to enhance access to essential services such as health care. However, the establishment and/or the enhancement of social security schemes are also increasingly under consideration. According to ESCWA, the bulk of health-care budgets is still spent on fighting communicable diseases, although chronic diseases persist. Training in gerontology and geriatrics is lacking in most parts of the region.

37. Across the region, civil society and/or faith-based organizations working in the area of ageing are very active, often with the financial support of — and in partnership with — Governments. Some organizations are contracted by Governments, including the Government of Egypt, to provide social services directly. Several countries have established national committees on ageing, comprised of representatives from both the public and private sector, to manage partnerships and oversee coordination with civil society.

IV. Overview of policy developments at national level since the first review and appraisal: older persons and development

38. The first priority directive in the Madrid Plan of Action covers issues related to the inclusion and participation of older persons in development, both as contributors and beneficiaries. The Plan of Action identifies several specific issues in need of particular attention from policymakers, in order to ensure the continued integration and empowerment of older persons in the context of rapid social and economic changes experienced by ageing societies.

Active participation in society and development

39. A major tenet of the Plan of Action is to fight against ageism and encourage changes in attitudes, policies and practices in order to achieve the goal of providing older persons with the opportunity to continue contributing to society within the framework of "a society for all ages". The Plan of Action also underlines the importance of the participation of older persons in decision-making processes related to ageing issues at all levels.

40. Since 2007, a number of countries have adopted new legislation that addresses age discrimination and the rights older persons, including the repeal of provisions that have contributed to age discrimination. One example of such legislation is the law for older persons that came into force in Nicaragua in 2009 and which, inter alia, established the National Council for Older Persons to ensure that the needs and concerns of older persons are taken into account in decision-making. Programmes that encourage older persons to participate in political, social and economic life, such as the Saudi Arabia national strategic plan for healthy ageing 2010-2015, represent another type of initiative.

41. As part of the second review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action, several Governments have consulted with civil society organizations in order to

ensure that the voices of older persons are heard. In the Asia and Pacific region, Fiji has adopted a bottom-up approach, recommended by the Commission for Social Development through the national Council of Social Services. The approach led to the recent "Community consultation on the national policy framework on ageing and the elderly" at which feedback was obtained from community leaders, non-governmental organizations and senior citizens.

Work and the ageing labour force

42. Another central tenet of the Madrid Plan of Action is the participation of older persons in labour markets for as long as they would like, and as long as they are able to do so productively. The Plan calls for implementing policies that increase the participation of older persons in the labour market in order to, inter alia, reduce the risk of exclusion and dependency in later life.

43. A growing number of countries have adopted laws to combat discrimination against older workers, for example in Uruguay, where, in 2007, the Government introduced the "*monotributo*" law, allowing retirees and pensioners with low incomes to continue to work. According to a recent review published by the International Labour Organization (ILO), some form of legislation against age discrimination in employment exists in approximately 50 countries around the world. However, it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of such legislation in combating age discrimination. Effective means of publicizing relevant legal provisions and of monitoring and enforcing compliance are also needed if laws are to have an impact. Some countries have also launched informational campaigns to combat negative stereotypes held by employers.

44. Discrimination in hiring, promotion and access to job-related training[6] remains an important challenge faced by older workers. Older workers who lose their jobs tend to remain unemployed for longer periods than their younger counterparts. Some countries have started to tackle this challenge, including Hungary through its "START EXTRA" programme, begun in 2007, and its decentralized programme for the employment of disadvantaged persons, initiated in 2008. The programmes aim to provide older unemployed persons with help and assistance in finding employment. Similarly, Serbia has included the employment of older persons as an objective of its new employment strategy for 2011-2020, and also offers an exemption from social insurance contributions to employers hiring older workers. Initiatives and efforts to reintegrate the unemployed into the labour market are especially relevant to older persons and should be given priority in economic and social integration.

Rural development, migration and urbanization

45. The Madrid Plan of Action calls upon Governments to take rural demographics into account in designing and implementing programmes for food security and agricultural production. In many developing countries and countries with economies in transition, as a result of the exodus of young adults the rural population is markedly aged. However, few countries have implemented policies and programmes

[6] Department of Economic and Social Affairs/Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (2010), "Current Status of the Social Situation, Well-being, Participation in Development and Rights of Older Persons Worldwide", New York (unedited) (see http://www.un.org/ageing).

intended to improve living conditions and infrastructure in rural areas and to alleviate the marginalization of older persons.[7]

46. In 2009, Indonesia adopted a law on the protection of farming land for sustainable food production, which is a good example of legislation that mainstreams the special needs of older persons. Another notable example is the new pension system in China, initiated in 2009, which aims to improve the living conditions of the country's rural population and prevent the isolation of older persons in rapidly developing urban areas. In addition, the Government of China created a new pension system for urban residents in 2011.

Access to knowledge, education and training

47. The Madrid Plan of Action calls upon Governments to support and facilitate the access of older persons to knowledge and educational and training opportunities. Continuing education and training are an important component of an active and fulfilling life, and further ensure the productivity of both individuals and nations. Lifelong education and training are also critical for the participation of older persons in the labour force. Yet the level of education among persons aged 60 years and above remains much lower than among younger generations. As a result, older persons face challenges in adjusting to economic and technological changes.

48. Lifelong education for older persons has typically taken the form of "third age" Universities, in countries such as Argentina, Canada, China, Indonesia, Hungary, the Russian Federation and Serbia. For instance, in Argentina there is a specific programme, namely the University Extension for Older Persons (Extensión Universitaria para Adultos Mayores), which provides courses for older persons at national universities.

49. While there have been reports of small-scale, local-level initiatives that offer older persons training in information and communications technology (ICT), there are no such national programmes on record. However, worth noting is the case of Hungary, where recently implemented programmes aimed at improving ICT skills among the general population, such as the net ready programme (2007) and the e-Hungary programme (2004), have been successful among older persons.

Intergenerational solidarity

50. The Madrid Plan of Action posits that Governments have a special responsibility to promote a society for all ages, to which intergenerational solidarity is fundamental.

51. South Africa provides a good example of how generations can come together to share their cultural heritage. In 2006, the Oral History Project at the National Archives was launched to gather the stories of older persons who participated in key historical events in that country's recent history. More recently, the Government also promoted intergenerational solidarity through the draft national policy on the South African living heritage of 2009 and an intergenerational dialogue programme, which began in 2010.

[7] UNFPA and HelpAge International (2011), "Overview of available policies and legislation, data and research, and institutional arrangements relating to older persons — progress since Madrid", report compiled in preparation for *The State of the World's Older Persons 2012* (unpublished draft).

52. In the United States of America, resources were made available through the Older Americans Act to support intergenerational social and recreational programmes for older volunteers. The Act also supports services that encourage and facilitate interaction between school-age children and older adults. The European Commission is organizing the European Year for Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity in 2012. The European Day of Solidarity between Generations is celebrated each year on 29 April.

Eradication of poverty

53. While the struggle against poverty among older persons is at the core of the Madrid Plan of Action, poverty among older persons continues to be largely ignored, despite the introduction of global and national poverty targets and policies. Actions aimed at reducing poverty among older persons should target the distinct causes of poverty in old age as well as their individual and household dimensions: malnutrition and hunger; access to basic services, including health, water and sanitation; and social exclusion.

54. Some countries, such as Belize, Cambodia, Mozambique and Serbia, have incorporated the needs of older persons into their national poverty reduction strategies. In Kyrgyzstan, the national strategy on poverty reduction of 2010 refers to old age as a period when people are particularly likely to fall into poverty.

55. In a number of English-speaking Caribbean countries, initiatives aimed at reducing poverty in old age include in-kind food subsidies to ensure the nutrition of poor older persons. For instance, in Saint Kitts and Nevis, the home care programme for older persons assists them in their homes with hot meals, food packages, medical assistance and social interaction.

Income security, social protection/social security and poverty prevention

56. The Madrid Plan of Action views social protection systems, whether contributory or non-contributory, formal or informal, as the foundation of economic prosperity and social cohesion, and critical to addressing the feminization of poverty in old age.

57. Although the lack of both social protection and income security is still an overwhelming problem for a large number of older persons, the recent past has witnessed a series of initiatives in several countries in the African and Latin American and Caribbean regions aimed at developing some form of social protection.

58. In Kenya, the draft national social protection strategy (2009-2014) includes social pension programmes to be developed in rural areas. These programmes are targeted at households headed by older persons with children under the age of 15. In addition, a cash transfer scheme has been instituted for older persons who are not receiving any kind of pension and who are caring for orphans and vulnerable children, including children with disabilities or chronic illnesses. In the Plurinational State of Bolivia, the "dignity pension" (*renta dignidad*), introduced through law No. 3791 in 2008, has established a universal non-contributory old-age pension.

59. Several countries in Latin America with low levels of social protection coverage have recently expanded non-contributory pension schemes for older

people. In 2008, the Government of Chile introduced a non-contributory tax-funded solidarity pension system for people over 65 who have lived in Chile for at least 20 years and whose private pension does not reach the minimum threshold of the solidarity pension. In September 2010, Peru launched a pilot programme of supportive care (*gratitud*), which provides financial support to persons over 75 years of age who are living in extreme poverty. The Bahamas and Anguilla have similar schemes.

60. In Asia, as mentioned above, China established a rural old-age pension scheme in 2009 and an urban pension system in 2011. Thailand established a basic universal social pension in 2009, available to persons over 60 years of age. In Lebanon, the Social Action Plan of 2007 has provisions for the expansion of safety nets for older persons living in poverty.

61. In developed countries, pension reforms have long been on the policy agenda. Australia, Finland, Japan, New Zealand and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland have all recently reformed their pension systems. The ECE regional review and appraisal process will provide an opportunity to discuss and assess the impact of these reforms.

Emergency situations

62. The Madrid Plan of Action calls the attention of Governments to the vulnerability of older persons in emergency situations such as natural disasters. The Plan also emphasized that older persons can make positive contributions to emergency relief efforts as well as to rehabilitation and reconstruction.

63. The specific needs of older persons are generally overlooked in emergency situations. A study undertaken by HelpAge International in 2010 found that only 93 out of 1,912 humanitarian assistance projects surveyed explicitly addressed older persons as a vulnerable group.[8] Few initiatives have been reported in this area. In Kenya, the 2009 draft of the national policy for disaster management explicitly mentioned older persons. More concrete provisions are contained in Viet Nam's decree No. 13/2010/ND-CP, which provides for humanitarian aid and disaster relief programmes targeted to older persons. In the United States, the Federal Emergency Management Agency issued a "Preparing makes sense for older Americans" toolkit in 2011 as part of its emergency preparedness initiative. The Federal Emergency Management Agency also maintains local registers of older persons.

V. Advancing health: an imperative for well-being into old age

64. Good health is not only a vital individual asset, but is also crucial to the development of societies. In this context, access to preventive and curative care, the training of personnel and the adaptation of facilities to meet the special needs of older populations are key policy initiatives. Given the acknowledged importance of good health, efforts to expand and improve specific areas of health care for older persons have been established as a priority, although mainly in developed countries. Despite growing recognition of the issue of non-communicable diseases at the recent United Nations high-level meeting on non-communicable disease prevention

[8] HelpAge International (2010), study of humanitarian financing for older people, London.

and control, their connection to older persons and population ageing in the outcome document was tenuous.

A. Health promotion and well-being throughout life

65. The promotion of healthy living practices and equal access of older persons to health care and services that include disease prevention throughout the lifespan is the cornerstone of healthy ageing. Accordingly, the Madrid Plan of Action underlines three specific objectives: the reduction of the cumulative effects of factors that increase the risk of disease and consequent potential dependence in older age; the development of policies to prevent ill health among older persons; and access to food and adequate nutrition for all older persons.

66. In recent years, some countries have implemented programmes on healthy ageing and/or taken initiatives aimed at the long-term prevention of chronic diseases. In 2008, South Africa introduced Healthy Lifestyles Day, and subsequently introduced the "Active ageing" programme (2009/2010) and guidelines on the prevention and management of old age-related chronic diseases and other health needs of older persons. In 2009, Finland established a national advice and service network to promote the well-being and health of older persons.

67. Promotion of the health and well-being of older persons is also mainstreamed into wider national health policies. For example, the 2007 national health policy of Mozambique makes reference to older persons as a specific vulnerable group. In other cases, healthy ageing is mainstreamed into broader national development plans, for example in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, where the national development plan "Living well" (2006-2010) refers to health promotion and healthy ageing. Similarly, in Lebanon, a specific programme aimed at expanding health coverage by targeting older persons suffering from chronic diseases was introduced under the social action plan of 2007.

68. In a majority of countries, however, healthy ageing is referred to only in national plans on ageing, not in corresponding programmes and policies. This is very often the case in the areas of nutrition and access to improved water and sanitation facilities.

B. Universal and equal access to health-care services

69. Investing in health care and rehabilitation extends the healthy and active years of older persons and increases their contribution to economic growth and social development. Unfortunately, older persons often experience financial, physical, psychological and legal barriers to health-care services. They also encounter age discrimination in the provision of health-care services because their treatment may be perceived as having less value than that of younger persons. The Madrid Plan of Action stresses that older persons are fully entitled to access to preventive and curative care, and calls upon Governments to set and monitor standards of health care as well as to provide health care to people of all ages.

70. Some countries have recently introduced significant reforms to policies or provisions in the area of health care for older persons. In Western Asia, for instance, Lebanon's social action plan of 2007 includes the expansion of health coverage for

older persons suffering from chronic diseases. In Asia and the Pacific, the Government of Viet Nam passed a law on the elderly in 2009, which stipulates that older persons aged 90 and above will receive discount rates for health services, even if they do not have health insurance. In addition, decree No. 13/2010/ND-CP stipulates that older persons who live alone, in poverty, or with disabilities, should be given priority in accessing health care. The 2007 national health policy of Mozambique accords free health-care eligibility to older persons.

71. Finland, one of the more developed countries, introduced a national framework for high-quality services for older people in 2008, with the objective of achieving better quality health care for older persons.

C. Older persons and HIV and AIDS

72. The Madrid Plan of Action emphasizes the importance of addressing HIV and AIDS among older persons. The Plan also calls for better recognition of, and support for, the role of older persons as caregivers to children and adults living with HIV and AIDS. The impacts of the disease on older persons are typically not addressed by public information campaigns, and older persons do not benefit from education on ways to protect themselves from HIV and AIDS.

73. The issue of HIV and AIDS among older persons is still largely ignored. Very few countries have developed new policies or programmes in recent years. However, some developing countries have mainstreamed ageing into their national strategic plans for HIV and AIDS, including Thailand, which, in its tenth national AIDS plan (2007-2011), included older persons as a specific target group for interventions. In some cases, only specific categories of older persons have been targeted, for example in the national AIDS strategic plan of Kenya (2009/2010-2012/2013), which focuses only on persons aged between 50 and 64. The Kenyan national reproductive health strategy (2009-2015), however, includes the promotion of awareness of all levels of health care with regard to the sexual and reproductive health needs of older persons.

74. In developed countries, in a new initiative by the United States, the White House Office of National AIDS Policy convened a meeting in 2010 on "Highlighting HIV issues among older Americans". Government representatives and civil society organizations discussed strategies that would enable them to realize the vision promoted by the President for a national HIV and AIDS strategy applicable to older persons.

D. Training of care providers and health professionals

75. The Madrid Plan of Action stresses that, as the number of older persons increases rapidly, the worldwide need to expand educational opportunities in the field of geriatrics and gerontology for health professionals, social service professionals and informal caregivers will become more urgent.

76. Despite some progress, the lack of professional and training opportunities remains a main concern for Member States, particularly in developing countries. In Western Asia, several countries have implemented training programmes in the field of geriatrics for physicians and nurses, such as in Saudi Arabia, where the

Government passed a national strategic plan for healthy ageing (2010-2015). Several Latin American and Caribbean countries, including Argentina, Cuba, Chile, Brazil, El Salvador and Belize, as well as the Netherlands Antilles, have now made training in geriatrics and gerontology widely available to health professionals.

77. In some cases, new specialized degrees in gerontology have been added to medical curricula, such as the graduate degree in community and institutional gerontology introduced in Argentina in 2007. However, the expansion of professional education in geriatrics and gerontology alone is not enough to have an impact on population health if facilities to access medicine continue to be scarce and if it is not matched by an increased number of students interested in this field.

E. Mental health needs of older persons

78. The Madrid Plan of Action called the attention of the international community to the growing challenge of responding to the mental health needs of rapidly ageing populations. Mental health problems are a leading cause of disability and reduced quality of life in older age. The timely and accurate diagnosis of such problems and their appropriate treatment can, inter alia, avoid unnecessary institutionalization. Strategies to cope with mental health diseases include medication, psychological support, cognitive training programmes, training for caregiver family members and care provider staff and specific models for in-patient care.

79. Mental health disorders in older persons, including Alzheimer's disease and dementia, are receiving increasing attention owing to the fact that the oldest of the aged, those 80 years and above, are the fastest growing demographic segment in many societies. As such, the number of people afflicted continues to rise. However, existing initiatives still fall short of meeting the Plan's call to develop comprehensive mental health-care services.

80. In Australia, the fourth national mental health plan (2009-2014) stresses the importance of collaboration with aged-care agencies, while resources have been allocated for the education and training of professionals through the national framework for action on dementia 2006-2010. More recently, the extended aged care at home — dementia programme has also commenced. France adopted its first Alzheimer's plan 2008-2012, which aims to increase awareness and early detection of the disease, as well as improve the care of persons suffering from it. In Singapore, psychogeriatric services have been provided since 2008 through the Singapore Institute of Mental Health. In addition, the Health Promotion Board of the Ministry of Health provides a public education programme on the mental health of older persons.

81. In the area of informal caregiving, Japan initiated a nationwide caravan to train, in a five-year period, one million people to support individuals suffering from dementia and their families.

F. Older persons and disabilities

82. The incidence of impairment and disability increases with age. Older women are particularly vulnerable to disability in old age owing, inter alia, to gender differences in life expectancy and disease susceptibility as well as gender

inequalities over the lifespan. The Madrid Plan of Action stresses that enabling interventions and environments supportive of all older persons are essential to promoting independence and empowering older persons with disabilities to participate fully in all aspects of society.

83. Policies and programmes targeting older persons with disabilities are reported in a number of developed countries. Some of these initiatives come in the wake of the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Australian National Disability Agreement of 2009 includes provisions targeting older persons with disabilities, as did its 2007 revision of the Home and Community Care Act of 1985. Serbia also established a new project in 2009 to improve services at the local level, which includes provisions for older persons with disabilities.

VI. Ensuring enabling and supportive environments

84. The promotion of an enabling and supportive environment for social development was one of the central goals agreed on at the 1995 World Summit for Social Development. Further to that goal, the Madrid Plan of Action stresses that Governments must play a central role in formulating and implementing policies that foster such an enabling environment, while engaging civil society and older persons themselves. The primary objective of the Plan in this regard is the promotion of "ageing in place" in one's community, with due regard to individual preferences and affordable housing options for older persons.

A. Housing and the living environment

85. Housing, surrounding environments and transportation systems that are accessible and safe are critical to the social integration and participation of older persons.

86. Several developed countries have recently implemented programmes that facilitate ageing in place. In Australia, for example, provisions for a basic range of maintenance and support mechanisms to help older persons remain in their homes were included in the 2007 revision of the Home and Community Care Act of 1985. In Canada, the home adaptations for seniors' independence programme, which has been provisioned with financial resources through 2014, offers financial assistance for minor home modifications in cases where the occupant is 65 years of age or over. The 2010-2011 economic action plan has also allocated a significant budget to the construction of housing units for low-income seniors. Several developing countries have also introduced similar programmes and policies. For instance, in Viet Nam, the law on the elderly (2010) provides construction regulations to facilitate mobility. In Uruguay, Law No. 18340 of 2001 and 2008 makes provision for grants to make housing available to retired people.

B. Care and support for caregivers

87. In all regions of the world, particularly in developing countries, care of older persons is mainly provided by family or community. Even in countries with well-developed formal health-care policies, informal care plays a very significant and undervalued role. However, the lack of assistance or compensation to family

caregivers is creating new economic and social strains. Without such adequate support, family caregivers are often overburdened.

88. A number of innovative initiatives are being developed in many countries to improve the quality of care for older persons and alleviate the burden of care on family caregivers. In Hungary, the Government adopted a "one step forward" programme, which offers training courses for caregivers and establishes a care-allowance system. In developing countries, an example that deserves to be highlighted is the progressive care network for comprehensive care of older people in Costa Rica. The network attempts to integrate all actors involved in the provision of care to older persons, from the Government sector to the community, private sector and family members, in order to provide a holistic and coordinated set of services and benefits.

C. Neglect, abuse and violence

89. At the time of the Madrid Conference, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that between 4 per cent and 6 per cent of older persons worldwide have suffered from some form of elder abuse. Recent research, although patchy, suggests that the figures, inclusive of neglect, may be significantly higher.[9] Neglect, abuse and violence against older persons take many forms and occur in every social, economic, ethnic and geographical context. Some risk factors for elder abuse include social isolation, societal depictions of older persons and the erosion of bonds between generations. In many societies, older women are at particular risk of being abandoned and having their property seized when they are widowed. Institutional abuse occurs most often where there are poorly trained and/or overworked staff, and when care standards are low or inadequately monitored.

90. However, this issue has only recently received policy and legislative attention in some countries. In particular, much progress has been achieved in Latin America, through the development of specific protocols, institution-building and special programmes. For example, a very comprehensive system has been put in place in Mexico City, including: (a) a network for the prevention, detection and treatment of violence against older people, which works in close collaboration with social organizations; (b) an inter-agency group for the prevention, detection and response to violence against older persons, opened in 2005 and composed of 10 institutions that are currently working on a treatment protocol; and (c) a specialized agency for the care of older persons who are victims of violence, created in April 2010.

91. In other countries, elder abuse is mainstreamed into wider sectoral policies or legislation. In Belize, violence against older women is addressed within the framework of the domestic violence law of 2008. In Mozambique, the national five-year plan 2010-2014 provides for the development of actions against physical and sexual abuse of older persons. Other initiatives include programmes to promote public awareness of elder abuse, such as in Canada, where, in 2009, the federal elder abuse initiative organized a national awareness-raising campaign called "Elder abuse — it's time to face the reality".

[9] See, for instance, Age Concern New Zealand (2008), "Elder Abuse and Neglect" (see http://www.ageconcern.org.nz/files/, accessed on 1 October 2011.